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Schools Recognized for Tapping into Students' Ideas to Inform Local Education Decision-making

Project Tomorrow Recognized the 2011 Speak Up 200: Schools and Districts Who Are Empowering Students, Parents and Teachers in Decision-Making

IRVINE, CA. (November 15, 2011) – Two hundred schools and districts across the country were recognized for incorporating feedback from their students as they develop strategic plans, make budgeting decisions, enhance their curriculum and determine professional development needs. Project Tomorrow®, a national education nonprofit, announced this year's Speak Up 200, a collection of the top K-12 schools in the country that encourage and involve authentic student, parent and educator ideas and views in education planning and decision-making.

"We are very encouraged to know that some of the most innovative districts in our country are using the ideas of students as well as parents and teachers as input into their decision-making," said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow. "By empowering student voices, the 2011 Speak Up 200 schools provide the education community with powerful examples of the value of including stakeholders in these important discussions around education transformation and school improvement."

The schools were selected for this national distinction from the 30,000 schools nationwide that have participated in the annual Speak Up surveys, conducted by Project Tomorrow, since 2003. The Speak Up National Research Project collects K-12 student, parent and educator viewpoints on technology, 21st century education and student aspirations through an annual online survey process and shares that data with national, state and local policymakers to improve education for all children.

The schools selected for the 2011 Speak Up 200 represent a broad range of educational institutions in rural, suburban and urban communities. The complete list of Speak Up 200 recognized schools are highlighted on the Project Tomorrow website at **http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/speakup_200.html**.

Based upon total participation and demonstrated commitment to engaging their stakeholders in local decisions on education issues, five school districts were additionally recognized for special distinction:

Top 5 school districts (based on high level of participation in Speak Up)

- Klein Independent School District (Texas)
- Shelby County School District (Alabama)
- Brevard County School District (Florida)
- Clark County School District (Nevada)
- Madison County School District (Alabama)

Top performing district for parent participation in the surveys

- Poway Unified School District (California)

Top performing district for administrator participation in the surveys

- Klein Independent School District (Texas)

This year schools and districts shared some of their insights on the benefits of participating in Speak Up:

"The Speak Up survey affords schools a unique, no-cost opportunity to gain insight of student, staff and parent views regarding STEM education and technology usage. We use the data from the survey to shape curriculum and drive strategic planning."

Paul Caputo, Superintendent, Upper Dauphin Area Elementary School District (PA)

"For students, it gives them a chance to participate in a public policy conversation and allows their voices to be heard. For teachers, it provides a great conversation starter to better understand their students. For school administrators and district leaders it provides important information for future planning."

Ann McMullan, Executive Director of Educational Technology, Klein Independent School District (AZ)

"Local feedback from the annual Speak Up research project offers valuable insight from our stakeholders that may not otherwise have been contributed or collected."

Matthew Frey, Manager, Educational Technology, Brevard Public Schools (FL)

"Speak Up provides incredibly relevant data regarding trends in educational technology and how K-12 kids learn best. We share the data with our school board, community, district leaders, principals, tech leaders, and teachers in order to help inform instruction and guide budget decisions."

Kathy Bari, Director of Educational Technology, Capistrano Unified School District (CA)

Project Tomorrow will promote the schools' distinction to the Congressional representative and state Governor of each Speak Up 200 school to demonstrate the power of educational innovation at the local level. The schools will also receive a unique Speak Up 200 logo to include on their school and district websites.

Project Tomorrow has tapped into the expertise of this year's Speak Up 200 schools to develop new questions for Speak Up 2011 which is currently open for student, educator and parent input at <http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/>. Additionally, their success stories are being shared with our partners and national policy organizations to inform national and regional education reform efforts.

More than 379,000 K-12 students, teachers, administrators and parents, representing 6,541 public, private and charter schools from all around the country participated in the Speak Up 2010 surveys which were open for participation in fall 2010.

About Project Tomorrow

Project Tomorrow is the nation's leading education nonprofit organization dedicated to the empowerment of student voices in education. With 15 years experience in the K-12 education sector, Project Tomorrow regularly provides consulting and research support about key trends in K-12 science, math and technology education to school districts, government agencies, business and higher education. For additional information, visit: www.tomorrow.org.

About the Speak Up National Research Project

The Speak Up National Research project annually polls K-12 students, parents and educators about the role of technology for learning in and out of school and represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder voice on digital learning. Since 2003, over 2.2 million K-12 students, parents, teachers, librarians, principals, technology leaders and district administrators have shared their views and ideas through Speak Up. Education, business and policy leaders report use the data regularly to inform federal, state and local education programs.

Speak Up 2011 was made possible through the generous support by many of our nation's most innovative companies, foundations and nonprofit organizations including Blackboard K-12, Dream Box, HP, K12, Inc., Schoolwires, SMART Technologies and Wireless Reach from Qualcomm. Project Tomorrow partners with over 75 different education associations, organizations and think-tanks for outreach to the schools and development of the survey questions including the Consortium for School Networking, iNACOL, International Society for Technology in Education, National School Boards Association, National Science Digital Library, Southern Regional Education Board and State Education Technology Directors' Association.